

BALDWIN COUNTY

Honorable Carmen E. Bosch

Baldwin County Courthouse
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Rine Massey
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Jimmy Johnson

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Karen E. Sharpe
Cheryl Given

Jaty Jager
Glenda C. Gault
Paige Benson
Tracy Turner
Cathy Pinion
Rodney Criswell
Stan Walter
John Cobb
Lou McKinley
Nancy Danley

Vista Volunteer: Charlene Gibbs

Council Priorities

1. Lack of consistency in quality childcare

Support the concept that all child care programs must meet standards that promote health and safety. Support the recommendations of Voices for Alabama's children that are forth coming from the study on child care practices in Alabama and how children are affected by the current laws and practices that relate to child care programs. The recommendations will help to improve care for all children in child care programs.

2. Day care needed for severely disabled children

Promote community interest through advertisement. Research possible funding with state and local agencies. Develop referral process and placement requirements.

3. Transportation

Continue to support the BRATS system already in place and growing. Continue to raise awareness of the immediacy of the issue especially with regard to getting the workforce to the job location.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Consistent standards in quality child care to safeguard the health and safety of all children in all child care programs in Alabama

Action Steps

- 1) Support the concept that all child care programs must meet standards that promote Health and Safety.
- 2) Support the recommendations of VOICES for Alabama's Children that are forth coming from the study on child care practices in Alabama and how children are affected by the current laws and practices that relate to child care programs. The recommendations will help to improve care for all children in child care programs.
- 3) Request that the State Department of Human Resources provide additional funding for improving the quality of child care programs especially training funds.

Increase parent participation in child care activities and their awareness of the lack of health and safety standards for all children in child care programs

Action Steps

- 1) Public awareness of early parental involvement in child care with good standards will avoid J.D. referrals in the future.
- 2) Provide parents with a good information system to help choose programs that meet good health and safety standards which lead to enhancing the learning skills of young children.

Additional subsidized funding for low-income working families

Action Steps

- 1) Request that surplus state tax dollars be used to purchase federal dollars for child care since one state tax dollar will purchase three federal dollars that are set aside for Alabama's children.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Transportation to work and service providers

Action Steps

- 1) Continue to support the BRATS system already in place and growing.
- 2) Continue to raise awareness of the immediacy of the issue especially with regard to getting the workforce to the job location.

Affordable housing

Action Steps

- 1) Continue to raise awareness of the lack of affordable housing in Baldwin County.
- 2) Continue to support the Interfaith Hospitality Network in its efforts to supply temporary housing to homeless families.
- 3) Support the efforts of an advisory committee that is working toward providing an in-patient treatment program for women who have substance abuse issues to address.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Dropout prevention

Action Steps

- 1) Offer academic classes, required for graduation, in summer school for students who have not failed a course.
- 2) Identify special-needs students as early as possible to ensure they receive appropriate services.
- 3) Provide alternative education settings for those students who are not successful in the regular school program, to include pregnant students, teen mothers, and to investigate on-line high school instruction, flex time, and flex class schedules.

Truancy prevention

Action Steps

- 1) Familiarize principals, teachers, and students regarding the procedures of the Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program by conducting faculty awareness meetings and in-services.
- 2) Familiarize parents and the public regarding the procedures of the Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program by speaking at PTO meetings, civic organizations, town meetings, and public forums.
- 3) Develop a follow-up instrument to assess school-based programs addressing absenteeism and promoting attendance.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

The number of uninsured children continues to rise although more than 1/2 are eligible for one of Alabama's child healthcare coverage programs

Action Steps

- 1) Statistics on Baldwin's uninsured.
- 2) Awareness campaign of Alabama healthcare coverage programs (All Kids, Medicaid, ACCP) -on-line application.
- 3) Strengthen screening methods (schools, HD, Doctors Office, churches, etc.)
- 4) Consider raising funds to pull Baldwin County kids off ACCP waiting list.
- 5) Simplify application process.
- 6) Work with family court to make families aware of All Kids and medical is available. Give out applications.

Lack of availability of crisis stabilization services in Baldwin County

Action Steps

- 1) Develop a search committee to explore how to fund and enact such a program.
- 2) Develop protocol of how to manage mental health needs at Juvenile Detention Center.
- 3) Coordinate support and current programs that have the potential to provide crisis services.

Daycare for severely disabled children (space has been acquired)

Action Steps

- 1) Promote community interest through advertisement.
- 2) Research possible funding with state and local agencies.
- 3) Develop referral process and placement requirements.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Identify through the court and education systems families who are in need of family strengthening skills

Action Steps

- 1) Obtain funding for Parent Project which works with "at risk" families of school children.
- 2) Will partner to work with the Baldwin County Fatherhood Initiative to provide parenting skills for non-custodial parents.

Work with area agencies for in-home referrals and day cares to provide parenting skills to the pre-school parents with a focus on teen parents

Action Steps

- 1) Access referrals from the SOBRA Medicaid Department, Head Start, and other service providers of children birth to 5 yrs. of age.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Youth violence/bullying

Action Steps

- 1) Establish uniform protocols within each county school system re: fights, and bus fights.
- 2) Establish programs in schools for offenders i.e. update-Character Education Program has already been established.
- 3) Raise public awareness of a zero tolerance for violence at schools by school officials and law enforcement.
- 4) School Resource Officer in schools: i.e. Update-Research sent to Mr. Hollinger of benefits of these by the District Attorney, Ms. Judy Newcomb.

Children are not free of crime and drugs in Baldwin County

Action Steps

- 1) Set up a mechanism for JDC and JPO to report statistics correlating crime and drug use in juveniles to help the Policy Council better identify this as an area that would benefit from funding.
- 2) Find an in-house provider in Baldwin County for drug treatment (only present provider is the outpatient TEEN program through Baldwin County Mental Health).
- 3) Spread out out-patient programs to promote county wide involvement.

Child abuse/neglect

Action Steps

- 1) Meet with the School Board and make the present Child Abuse Awareness program a mandatory part of each elementary and middle school's curriculum or provide incentives for it to be taught in each school.
- 2) Establish local hotline for parents to call for help, advice, or in a crisis so that they may avoid an incident of abuse/neglect.

Policy Recommendations

- State agencies need to coordinate efforts to determine whether duplication of services is occurring, so that necessary funds can be saved for the provision of all services needed in the state.
- Groups such as the Alabama Coalition against Domestic Violence, the Alabama District Attorneys Association, and the Alabama Sheriff's Associations need to be actively involved in the implementation of efforts to educate and protect children in the state.
- Agencies that can provide "backup" plans for students who are having issues succeeding in a school setting need to have an open line of communication with the Board(s) of Education to help young people transition to a productive adulthood and not create new generations of problems in the future.
- Providers need to make families more aware of the availability of services through public health offices.
- Agencies need to attempt to refer to private service providers when available to them, as many are at a low or no cost system through faith based and other community efforts.